

Tanana Valley State Forest Management Plan: Unit 2 Review

March 2003

Unit 2 of the Tanana Valley State Forest

In the Fall of 2002, Division of Forestry planning staff started a public process to determine how to manage State Forest lands in Unit 2 of the Tanana Valley State Forest (TVSF). Unit 2 encompasses about 160,000 acres along the Tanana River west of Old Minto, between Minto and Nenana (see map, next page).

Background

Planning issues were first raised in 1997 when the Division of Forestry proposed a timber sale in Unit 2. After reviewing public comments and concerns about the proposed sale, the Commissioner of Natural Resources directed Forestry to put the sale on hold. Forestry promised to do more detailed public planning for Unit 2 before proceeding with any timber sales in the unit. The Division of Forestry updated the management plan for all but Unit 2 of the Tanana Valley State Forest in 2001. This Unit 2 planning process will amend the guidelines for Unit 2.

Planning Process

The Division of Forestry conducted substantial outreach last summer (holding meetings and discussions and mailing newsletters) to identify stakeholders. Stakeholder planning meetings were held from November to February. Thirteen stakeholders participated in the planning team meetings, representing environmental concerns, the timber industry, Native interests, tourism operators, subsistence users, hunters, dog mushers, fish and wildlife interests, oil and gas, mineral interests, land management, and state forestry.



Summary of Planning Team Meetings

The team first identified issues and concerns, which included access, riparian management, timber management, fish and wildlife habitat, subsistence uses, economics and community benefits, fire, management near the Old Minto site, and tourism. The stakeholder planning team then developed consensus agreements on amendments to the plan that would address these concerns. Their recommended changes are summarized on the following pages. For a complete copy of the proposed changes, or for more information, contact:

Alison Arians
DNR Division of Forestry
550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1450
Anchorage, AK 99501
(907) 269-8450
alisona@dnr.state.ak.us

How can you be involved?

Planning staff will hold public meetings in Minto, Nenana, Manley Hot Springs, and Fairbanks to give people an opportunity to comment on the proposed amendment to the plan. By reading this brochure, then attending a public meeting, calling, or writing an e-mail or a letter, you can tell us what you think. **Public comments must be received at the above address by mail, fax, or email by 5:00 PM, Thursday, April 24, 2003.**

Amending the Tanana Valley State Forest Management Plan

After the public comment period is complete and concerns are addressed, the Tanana Valley State Forest Management Plan will be amended.



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED CHANGES

A. Summary of Management Intent

No changes are proposed for the first section, the Summary of Management Intent.

B. Existing Resources and Uses

This section incorporates a few changes to add background information. The Cultural Resources section includes a new section on Old Minto:

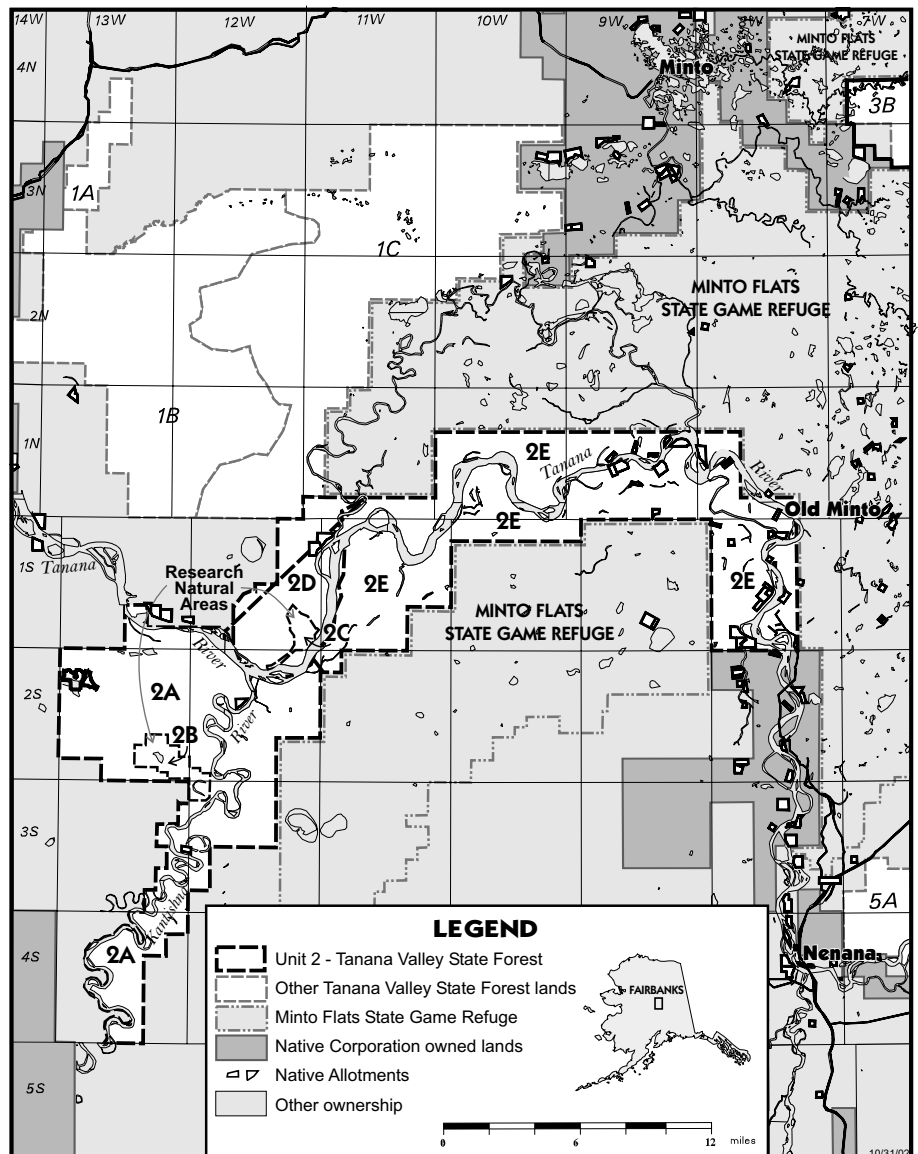
Old Minto is the site of seasonal cultural activities for Minto residents and for people outside the village to learn about Athabascan culture. Although Minto village has been relocated to a new site approximately twenty miles north, Old Minto is still an important cultural site for the former residents, their children and grandchildren. Old Minto also is home to a year-round rehabilitation camp run by Tanana Chiefs Conference.

The **Recreation** section explains that “scenic values of the riparian zone are important to recreation and tourism activities in Unit 2.”

The **Scientific Resources** section acknowledges research opportunities near Sawmill Island, near Old Minto, since much of the area was harvested during the steamboat wood-cutting era, and some harvesting also occurred in the mid-1900s.

The **Subsurface Resources** section was updated to reflect the natural gas potential in the Nenana Basin, and to note the start of exploration licensing in the area.

Unit 2, Tanana Valley State Forest



C. Management Guidelines and Activities

A new **Cultural Resources** section was added to describe Division of Forestry's intent to cooperate with Old Minto programs:

Cultural Resources. The Division of Forestry intends to make firewood or other timber available to meet the needs of Old Minto programs. DOF will coordinate with Old Minto lessees when planning timber harvest activities near Old Minto.

A sentence was added to the **Development Activities Near Private Land** section to clarify that landholders near the State Forest (for both private land and Native allotments) can comment on timber sales during the Forest Land Use Plan process for each sale.

A new **Fish and Wildlife Habitat** section was added to address habitat enhancement opportunities in timber harvest activities, and opportunities for local community members:

Fish and Wildlife Habitat. Post-logging site treatments (e.g., scarification or crushing) may be used to encourage regeneration of willows or hardwoods that provide food and cover for wildlife. Habitat enhancement projects are encouraged in Unit 2. The Department of Fish and Game and the Division of Forestry are encouraged to pursue funding opportunities for habitat enhancement work. In addition, planning for and obtaining funding for habitat enhancement work that timber operators could do while on site (e.g., shear-blading) are encouraged.

Habitat enhancement projects could benefit from the knowledge and skills of local crews and community members. Habitat enhancement work could also serve as training for local fire crews, especially when the work includes fire or modifying fuels.

In areas where buffers may not provide adequate visual screening from the river, Forest Land Use Plans for each timber sale will recommend specific guidelines for post-logging site treatments.

A section was added to the **Subsurface Resources** section to clarify guidelines for Oil and Gas:

Oil and Gas. Oil and Gas exploration and development are guided by DNR's existing leasing (licensing) process. However, for the two Research Natural Areas (RNAs), Subunits 2B and 2C, the Oil and Gas leasing process should consider the purposes for which the RNAs were established, as well as the management guidelines for the RNAs.

A sentence was added to the **Scientific Resources** section that encourages research in Unit 2, even outside of the Research Natural Areas, as long as the research does not conflict with other uses.

The **Streamside Management** section now describes the guidelines that the Division of Forestry has adopted for timber sale buffers along rivers. The plan adopts the interim Region III riparian standards, which include buffer guidelines based on stream type. The standards

protect fish habitat by ensuring the continued supply of large woody debris, shading, and other factors. The section also references recent research on historic erosion patterns on the Tanana River.

The **Timber Sales** section explains an upcoming process that will address old forests in Unit 2, as well as elsewhere in the Tanana Valley State Forest:

Unit 2 encompasses many older riparian stands. An Old Forest Science and Technical Committee will be convened to evaluate biological functions of older forests and to identify management guidelines.

This section also includes a new section emphasizing how timber sales can be designed to benefit local communities:

When designing timber sales in Unit 2, consider targeting local markets for local use and processing of timber. DOF intends to provide timber sales in a range of sizes to meet the needs of local markets and communities.

This section also notes that Unit 2's remote location might make it appropriate for longer-term timber sales.

The **Trails** section refers to a new guideline in the Transportation section that is designed to minimize negative impacts on trails from timber roads.

New guidelines in the **Transportation** section include information about the types of roads that are likely to be constructed in Unit 2, and encourages joint use of any roads constructed in the area.

Transportation. Because of extensive wet soils, and because all-season roads can add hunting pressure to some areas, current management favors winter access to Unit 2 for timber harvest. In some cases, however, sections of all-season roads may be feasible and appropriate outside the Minto Flats State Game Refuge.

Joint access is especially encouraged in Unit 2. Resource agencies authorizing any development activity requiring access through or near Unit 2 should consult with the Division of Forestry to plan access that will be beneficial for multiple uses. Where feasible and prudent, the state will seek cooperative agreements or easements with Doyon Ltd., village corporations, or other landowners to reduce costs of access roads.

This section includes a new guideline designed to minimize the impacts of forest roads on trails.

Forest roads shall be sited, built, and maintained to minimize trail use conflicts.

The last part of the Transportation section describes potential access to the area, and some authorizations that the Division of Forestry must obtain from the Department of Fish and Game in order to use any routes through the Minto Flats State Game Refuge.

C. Management Guidelines and Activities, continued

Potential Access Roads:

The eastern part of Subunit 2E north of Nenana has already been accessed using a winter road running north from Nenana along the east side of the Tanana River and passing through a portion of the Minto Flats State Game Refuge. Use is dependent on permission of private landowners.

Primary access to the rest of Unit 2 is planned using the North Commission Line, which runs from Nenana to Subunit 2A. A right-of-way permit was issued to the Division of Forestry for the North Commission Line that expires in 2013 (ADL 414604). The Division of Forestry must also obtain a Special Area Permit from the Department of Fish and Game to construct a winter road across Refuge lands. This route may be upgraded to primary winter road standards within the Refuge, and possibly to all-season standards outside the Refuge where topography permits.

The Nenana-Totchaket tractor trail branches off the North Commission Line to the west, and may be used for access to the southern portion of Subunit 2A.

The central part of Subunit 2E may be accessed by extending an existing seven-mile tractor trail that branches to the north from the North Commission Line another ten miles, and improving the trail to primary winter road standards. The northern portion of this road would cross Minto Flats State Game Refuge. Subunit 2D may also be accessed by this winter road or the North Commission Line.

Other means of transporting timber from Unit 2 have been considered. Barging timber to Nenana on the Tanana River currently appears less cost effective than using winter roads.

Portions of all routes except the Nenana-Totchaket tractor trail pass through the Refuge. Access through the Refuge will be on winter roads.

What Happens Next?

Proposed amendments are reviewed by the public.

Public meetings are held to gather comments and identify necessary changes.

CURRENT STEP:

(Spring 2003)

Final amendment prepared.
Planning staff reviews comments and makes changes to proposed amendment.

(Summer 2003)

Amendment adopted and implemented.
The commissioner of the Department of Natural Resources signs the plan. The plan then guides DNR land management decisions in Unit 2 of the Tanana Valley State Forest.

Comments on the Public Review Draft must be received by 5:00 PM on Thursday, April 24, 2003.

Send comments to:

Alison Arians
DNR Division of Forestry
550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1450
Anchorage, AK 99501-3566
Phone: (907) 269-8450
Fax: (907) 269-8902
E-mail: alisona@dnr.state.ak.us

PUBLIC MEETING SCHEDULE

At the public meetings, DNR staff will explain the proposed amendment to the plan and listen to your comments. You can also submit written comments at the meeting.

Minto	Monday, March 3, 2:00pm, at the Minto Lakeview Lodge
Nenana	Tuesday, March 18, 5:30pm, at the Nenana Tribal Office
Fairbanks	Wednesday, March 19, 5:30pm, at the DNR Building, 3700 Airport Way, Large Conference Room
Manley Hot Springs	Thursday, March 20, 5:30pm, at the Hot Springs Hall

Thanks to the stakeholders:

Doug Bowers, Tolovana Lodge
Tom Bucceri, DNR Division of Oil & Gas
Jim Durst, ADFG, Division of Habitat & Restoration
Chris Foley, Department of Environmental Conservation
Nancy Fresco, Northern Alaska Environmental Center
Edna Hancock, Toghotthele Corporation
Victor Joseph, Tanana Chiefs Conference
Paul Maki, DNR Division of Forestry
Steve McGroarty, DNR Division of Mining, Land & Water
Tom Paragi, ADFG, Division of Wildlife Conservation
Eric Pyne, Timber Industry
Ron Silas, Minto
Roselynn Ressa Smith, DNR Division of Mining, Land & Water

TAPE OR STAPLE HERE

PLEASE
PLACE
POSTAGE
HERE

Department of Natural Resources
Division of Forestry
550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1450
Anchorage, AK 99501-3566

CUT HERE

Tanana Valley State Forest Management Plan: Unit 2 Review

Comments on the Proposed Changes to the Plan (continue on back if needed)

(OPTIONAL)

Name _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

To return this mailer to us, please cut out this page along the vertical dashed line, then fold it along the horizontal dashed lines, folding this panel to the inside. The result should be the size of a letter, blank on one side and with the return address panel on the outside. Please affix postage, tape or staple the free edge, and mail to us.

**Thank you for participating in the
Tanana Valley State Forest planning process!**

Division of Forestry
Alaska Department of Natural Resources

Tanana Valley State Forest Management Plan: Unit 2 Review

November 2002

WHAT'S INSIDE:

Summary of Recommended Changes to the Plan:

- > Management Intent
- > Existing Resources and Uses
- > Management Guidelines & Activities

Department of Natural Resources
Division of Forestry
550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1450
Anchorage, AK 99501-3566